HE COMES UP SMILING

By CHARLES SHERMAN

CHAPTER XXIII—Continued.

"Who are your people?" asked Bartlett to gain time. He must make a plan to separate Billy from this impecunious suitor. Authority was useless. He must use act, finesse.

"My father was a minister," returned the Watermelon. "Yours was a grocer. Billy told me. Families don't count in America."

Bartlett nodded agreement. "Why did you become a tramp?"

"Through inclination, not the whisky bottle. Not that I am above getting full once in a while, 'cause I ain't. Just, I'm not a drunkard. See? I didn't keep on losing jobs through drink and finally had to take to the road because I was a bum. I took to tramping because I hate to work. It takes too much of your time. An office is like a prison to me. A man loses his soul when he stays all day bent over a desk. He isn't a man. He's sort of up-to-date pianola to a desk, that's all. There's a lot of things to think about that you can't in an office. I wanted to think and so I took to tramping. Besides, I don't like work."

"Lazy——"

"Yes," snapped the Watermelon, "but a man. I love your Billy—my Billy, and I can work for her."

Bartlett nodded indifferently, hardly hearing what the other said. He frowned thoughtfully at the floor as he pondered the situation. If he objected to the youth in Billy's presence, she would stand up for him, all her love would be aroused to arms and she would see no wrong in her hero. If the fellow snapped his fingers, she would run away with him. What did Billy, tender, gently-guarded Billy, know of tramps, of the rough, unhappy side of existence? Nothing. But if she caught a glimpse of it with her own eyes, saw this lover of hers in his true light, dirty, drunk, disreputable, the shock would kill her love utterly and Bartlett would not have to use that authority of his which was no authority, which Billy would refuse to obey. She had been free too long for any one to govern her now. The only person who could effectually break the unfortunate tangle was the Watermelon himself. Bartlett glanced at the gloomy face beside him and read it as he had grown used to reading men and events.

The Watermelon was young, hardly older than Billy; he was desperately in love, with a love that was pure and true and generous. He was thinking of Billy and not of himself. His opposition to Bartlett was merely the anger aroused by Bartlett's sneers. He was in reality filled with humility and repentence to a degree that he would do anything to kill the love Billy here for him, knowing with his man's knowledge that he was not worthy of her, and longing with his youth and love to sacrifice himself for her best good, seeing through young, unhappy eyes, only the past, his own shame and profession. Forgetting the possibilities of the future, he had gone to the extreme of self-loathing. The one thing he saw was his past, that past that was wholly unfit for Billy. It blocked the entire view, crushed him with the weight of inexorable facts. To the young there are but two colors, black and white, and the Watermelon was very young. Bartlett looked at him keenly and decided that his plan would work, that he would not have to take a last desperate and ineffectual stand against Billy.

"See here. In August we are going to our place in Westhaven. It's a small town in this State, up the coast away north of Portland. Come to her there at the end of August, come as you are, a tramp, dirty, shabby, drun—"

"I don't drink, not as the others do."

"Come drunk. Let her understand what being a tramp means, what your life has been. If she still wants you, I hardly see how I can stop her. That's only fair, for what does she know about you and your life? You know all about her, what she has done and been and is going to do. Leave her now, this evening. Go on being a tramp and then come to her, at the last of August. Come as a tramp, mind. Don't let her think that it is a test she is being put to or she will only laugh at it and us and go on wanting you just the same, scorning to be tested, to think that her love could fail. Give her some other excuse for your going. You must see that it is only fair to the little girl to let her see what she is up against."

"Yes, I see. I tried to tell her," agreed the Watermelon gloomily.

"If she loves you through it all, she can have you, and I suppose I will have to consent. I can afford a penniless son-in-law and I guess an American tramp is preferable to a European noble."

"I won't be penniless," said the Watermellon. "I could work like a nigger for a month and own forty dollars, thirty of which I would owe for board."

"That's just it," declared Bartlett promptly. "You can't support Billy in the way she is used to being supported, can't give her the things that have become necessities to her."

"I can support her in my own way," said the Watermelon, trying to reason down his own benumbing repentence and humiliation as well as to convince Bartlett of that which he himself knew to be all wrong.

"But that isn't Billy's way. You couldn't give her a servant, for instance, and servants to Billy are like chairs to some people, absolutely necessary."

"We love each other," said the Watermelon simply.

"That's all right. But you can't always be sure your love is like elastic and stretchable. Come as a tramp and I will give my consent." Bartlett grew bold, positively convinced that Billy could no longer care when she had once seen the drunken sot, promised as he had grown used to doing on the Street, to do that which he knew he would not have to do. I will give my consent, if Billy still can care. I know that Billy would be a lot happier with my consent, too, than without it. For, though the modern child has no respect for her parent's authority, she likes to have her wedding peaceful and conventional."

"Can I say good-by to her?"

"Yes, but I trust you not to let her know that she is to be put to a test. If you love her, you can see that I am right."

"Yes," said the Watermelon, "I love her and will not let her know."

He straightened up and pushed his hat farther back, with the slow, inbred languor of the thoroughly lazy man. "I love Billy, and that is why I consent. I tried to make her understand what I am, have been, but I couldn't." He took a handful of beans from a near-by barrels and let them run slowly through his fingers. "I suppose she will give me the double cross."

"I hope so," answered Bartlett. "I'm not very particular, but a tramp—"

"A gentleman pedestrian," suggested the Watermelon, with a faint flicked of his usual sublime arrogance.

Bartlett laughed and held out his hand. "Well, good-by. I've enjoyed the week immensely, for all this rotten ending. That scurvy trick of yours—"

"Of yours," corrected the Watermelon.

"Yes, yes, I suppose so. I hope that Henrietta won't ever know. Do you think Billy does?"

"Billy isn't as simple as you think," returned the Watermelon.

"What did she say?"

"'Father suggested the trip and he telegraphed after dinner,' or something like that."

"You didn't tell her it was my plan?" begged Bartlett. "I have to go on living with her."

"No, I didn't tell her, but she's next to the fact."

"I will speak to her," said Bartlett hastily. "I wouldn't like Henrietta to find out about it. Billy has wanted a motor boat for some time. I may give her one."

They walked slowly toward the door and once more shook hands.

"I would gladly have given the thousands I have lost to have you Batchelor, boy," said Bartlett gently.

"Aw, thanks," said the Watermelon.

"Tell the others I will be around when I have sent another telegram."

The Watermelon found Billy sitting on the steps of the only hotel in town. It was a big, square, uncompromising affair, blank and unattractive, and Billy alone on the top step, looked somehow small and forlorn and childlike. The Watermelon sat down beside her.

"Where's Henrietta?" he asked, ignoring her eyes and the question they asked.

"Up stairs," said Billy, "fixing up." She raised her hands to her own soft hair and bit her lip to get up courage to voice the question her eyes had already asked.

"Where's the general?" asked the Watermelon.

Billy nodded backward. "In the office, trying to convert the landlord. The landlord's a democrat, you know."

"Come and walk down the road with me a bit?" asked the Watermelon. He rose and held out his hand to help her up.

Billy rose with a trembling laugh that failed miserably in its manifest attempt to be brave.

It was late afternoon, sweet and cool as they left the village behind. The deep quiet of the last of the day was over fields and woods and road, the heat and strenuous business of the morning done. Cows were slowly meandering across the pastures to the familiar bars, empty teams rattled by on the way home, the driver humped contentedly over the reins, thinking of the day's bargains and of the supper waiting for him. The shadows were lengthening, long and graceful across the village green.

Neither Billy nor the Watermelon spoke until they had left the village some little way behind and had come to four cross-roads with the usual small dingy schoolhouse, door locked, dirty windows closed for the summer and shabby, faded blinds drawn.

Billy knew from the Watermelon's face that the interview with her father had been far from satisfactory. She feared that the Watermelon has not "stood up" for himself, that her speaking to her father that morning had not helped matters as she had hoped it would. She tried to think of something to say that would influence the boy, something she could do to show him how she cared, so he would not think of leaving her. The Watermelon was silent, for, now that the hour of parting had come, he did not know what to say, could not bring himself to leave her, gay, foolish, light-hearted Billy.

He, however, was the first to speak. The schoolhouse recalled miserable days of long dull confinement, and he nodded toward it, pausing in the grass by the wayside. "A standing monument," said he, "to buried freedom."

"I never went to school," said Billy. "It must be awful."

"Awful," the Watermelon shrugged. "It's taken ten years from my life. Schools should be abolished."

They sat down on the tiny, weather-stained step, side by side, in the gathering dusk.

"Billy," began the Watermelon earnestly, and then stopped.

Poor little Billy's heart fluttered and she put her hand to her hair in her nervousness. "You know," she said firmly, irrelevantly, "I love you, Jerry."

"I know, dear," replied the Watermelon. "And I love you. No matter where I am, Billy, no matter what happens, you are the best in me and I will keep you best. I'm shiftless, lazy, no 'count, but Billy, kid, I'll always love you."

"And we will get married and live happily ever after," crooned Billy.

"I'm going away to-night, Billy, back to the road."

"Oh, Jerry, please, dear. If father knew how much I care——"

"No, Billy, your father's right. He said to give you time; for me to go away for a while and maybe you would get—over it."

"And if I did," demanded Billy, "if I loved another, wouldn't you be jealous? Wouldn't you kill that other, Jeroboam Martin?" She clenched her small fist and pounded him on the knee to emphasize the passion in her voice.

"If he were a decent chap—" stammered the Watermelon, "it would be better for you."

"It's terrible," interrupted Billy, "when the girl has to do all the loving." She pushed the hair out of her hot face and stared angrily before her, across the road.

"You only love me, but I love you. See the difference?" asked the Watermelon. "It's simply impossible for your love to be as great as mine for that reason. Your father said I could come to you the last of August at Westhaven, and I'm coming, Billy."

"And then we can marry, did father say that?" asked Billy, turning to him.

"If you care still," muttered the Watermelon.

"Care," Billy laughed the contrary to merry scorn. "Care? Why, Jeroboam Martin, when will I not care?"

The Watermelon flushed and rose as the wisest course under the circumstances. "I'm off. Say good-by to the others for me, will you, Billy?"

"You will be my knight," whispered Billy. "And I will be your lady, and no knight ever went back on his lady, yet, Jeroboam."

"You've got a darned poor knight," grunted the Watermelon. Suddenly he turned and caught her in his arms, dragging her to him and forcing her head to see into her eyes. "Billy, Billy," he cried, "will you be true to me, for ever and for ever, no matter what happens, no matter what I do? Could you, will you love me always?"

"Always, always," whispered Billy.

"Dirty, drunk?"

"Dirty and drunk and sick and always," promised Billy. "Only you won't drink, because I love you."

"Love never yet stood between a man and the whisky bottle," sneered the Watermelon. "You don't know men, kid."

He let her go and turned away with a shamed laugh. "Good-by, Billy."

"Good-by, Jerry," replied Billy, frightened at she knew not what, realizing that there were after all things in men's lives of which she knew nothing. She walked with him to the fence and watched him swing over it.

"Cross-cuts for me," he explained, holding out his hand. She placed hers in it and he crushed her small fingers until they hurt, then turning abruptly, left her there among the brambles, watching him across the bars.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Poet or the Poodle.

THE day was unusually hot for late August in Maine. The grass was brown and dry, the leaves hung limply on the trees and the dust in the roads was ankle deep. No breeze came from the sea, while the sails of the pleasure boats drooped in warm dejection. Every one had sought shelter from the sun, and wharfs, streets, and houses of the small seaport town appeared deserted.

Bartlett had taken himself off to the dim seclusion of the house, where he lounged with windows opened, blinds drawn and a small table of cooling beverages near at hand. The heat, the drowsy, shrill hum of the crickets and the muffled, monotonous roar of the sea had a soothing influence and Bartlett let his book fall from his hands and slept, stretched at ease in the steamer chair. A door gently opening and softly shutting aroused him. He sat up, yawned and grunted.

"Hello," drawled a voice, slow, indifferent, familiar.

Bartlett recalled a week in June, when, with rare credulity, he had kidnaped a stranger and had discovered that he had been the one in truth to be kidnapped. He turned his head and saw the Watermelon crossing the room. He knew that it was the boy by the size of the shoulders and the grace of the long limbs, but the thin, good-natured face was covered with a month's growth of light hair, the brown suit with the pale green and red stripe was a suit no longer, merely a bundle of rags. The shirt was opened at the throat, without a tie or button, while the panama was shapeless and colorless, but worn with the familiar jaunty ease.

"Ah," said Bartlett. "Jeroboam Martin."

He smiled as one who meets an old and congenial friend, for Jeroboam Martin had shown a fine capability for getting out of a tight place and carrying through a desired project with success and nerve, and Bartlett had grown to like the lad.

"Am I bum enough?" asked the Watermelon, with no answering smile. When one has come to test love, life is too grim for smiles.

"You are fairly dirty and shabby," agreed Bartlett. "You look thin."

"I have had hard luck," said the Watermelon. "How's Billy?"

"Pretty well, thanks."

"Expecting me?" asked the Watermelon, taking off his hat and gently patting his back hair as he had a way of doing.

Bartlett nodded. "Yes, but not exactly as you are."

"It's tough on the little girl," muttered the Watermelon. He sank into a chair and stretched out his long legs with the weather-strained trousers and dirty, broken shoes. "Oh, mamma, I'm tired. Been hoofing it since sun-up yesterday with hardly a stop, I wanted to see the kid so."

"Well, go and get drunk," returned Bartlett. "And then you can see her."

The Watermelon frowned. "See here, I don't drink, necessarily. I'm not a brand to be plucked from the burning, a sheep strayed from the fold. The whisky bottle wasn't my undoing and didn't make me take to the highway, I'm not fallen. I was always down, I guess. I hate work; I hate worry and trouble, slaving like a Swede all day for just enough money to be an everlasting cheap guy. I like leisure and time to develop my own soul." He waved his hand in airy imitation of James.

"That's all right," said Bartlett. "But get drunk. If she can stand you soused she can stand you sober. She has got to know what she's getting, if she decides to take you after all."

The Watermelon's tired face grew a bit whiter under the tan and beard. He shrugged hopelessly and rose. "All right, if you say so. I hope to hell it will kill her love on the spot and she won't suffer for it afterward. I suppose it will." He started for the door and paused, one hand on the knob. "Shall I have it on you?" he asked with a smile. "I'm broke."

Bartlett tossed him a bill. "Is that enough?"

"Yes," said the Watermelon and slipped it into his pocket.

"Have one with me before you go," said Bartlett, pushing a glass and the bottle across the table.

The Watermelon filled his glass and raised it. "To Billy," said he.

"To Billy's happiness," amended Bartlett.

Maine is a prohibition State, but the Watermelon had been there before and knew just where and how to obtain what he was looking for. With the bottle in his pocket, he sought the beach and made his way up it to some secluded place where he could drink in peace and out of the heat of the sun. A seagull flew wheeling gracefully by to the distant cliffs, the waves, long, purring, foam-flecked, ran indolently up the gleaming sands, broke with a gurgling splash of seaweed and tumbled stones and ran back to meet the next one. The ocean stretched limitless before him and behind rose the rocks, hiding him completely from the sight of land. With a grunt of dissatisfaction, he sat down and drew the cork of the whisky bottle.

As the day advanced, the sun crept around the headland until it streamed unchecked upon the Watermelon, sprawled, drunk, and warm and dirty in the lee of the rocks. The combined heat of the sun and the poison he had in him, called by courtesy whisky, grew unbearable, and he rose in drunken majesty to find some cooler place. The sun would soon have thrown long shadows on the beach, but the Watermelon could not wait for that. He must get cool at once, and in the waves splashing, gurgling, laughing, breaking at his very feet, he found a suggestion. Where could one get cool if not in the sea itself? A steam yacht far away like a streak of white, was seen creeping slowly landward, but the Watermelon did not trouble about such a thing. He began to undress, solemnly, stubbornly, with the one thought to get cool.

The yacht, Mary Gloucester, was a gay little bark, all ivory white and shining brass work. A brightly striped awning covered the deck, there were large, comfortable chairs, with many-colored pillows and ribbons and chintz, and daintily arranged tables to assuage one's thirst and offer cooling bodily comfort on a hot day.

The Mary Gloucester was named after a poem of Kipling's, and her owner was explaining this fact, ensconced gracefully, if solidly, in a many-cushioned chair, her feet a bit awkwardly on the rest before her, a fan in one hand and a small, fat, white, woolly dog on her lap, his fore feet on the railing, his mouth open and his tiny red tongue flapping moistly from between his teeth.

"Whom do you love the more," asked Bertie Van Baalen, "Kipling or this angel child?" and Bertie sought to pull one fluffy white ear near his hand. But the little dog snarled angrily and snapped sharply at the hastily withdrawn fingers.

"Ah, the duckems, naughty man shan't tease him," crooned the lady, slapping at Bertie with the fan, while the little dog turned again to the sea.

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Armitage," said Henry Bliven solemnly. "Tell us truthfully, whom do you love the better, Kipling or the blessed duckems?"

"Do not hesitate or seek to spare either of their feelings," urged Bertie.

Mrs. Armitage laughed, fat, contented, placid. "Oh, you silly boys, comparing a poet and a dog, a blessed little doggie."

"I know it's hard on the dog," agreed Henry, gracefully launching a smoke wreath upward from his fat, red lips, moist like a baby's. "No dog would care to be compared with a thing so far beneath him as a poet, but all the same, are you a sport or an intellect?"

"An intellect?" questioned the lady, wrinkling her brows and gazing puzzled at the youth in the chair beside her.

"Are you, in other words, explained Henry, "of intellectual or sporting tendencies?"

"Think," warned Bertie, "before you answer. Kipling, a great poet, author of sentiments that will stir mankind for all ages, sentiments that will ennoble, strengthen——"

"Do you know," confessed the widow with the gleeful naivete of a child, "I like Kipling because he's so bad. He says such wicked things." She nodded and glanced audaciously from one youth to the other.

Henry reached wearily for his glass on the table beside him and Bertie Van Baalen sighed heavily. "You women! You make us bad. Don't you know you do? You want us bad, so we are—anything to please you beauteous creatures."

"I don't want you men bad, just poets," explained the widow, fanning herself slowly, cheerfully.

Henry waved the digression aside. "Now, tell us frankly, black and blue, cross your heart, do you prefer a small, dyspeptic, overfed, snapping bundle of cotton wool which is, for the sake of euphemism, called a dog, to one of the greatest minds of the day?"

"Yes," said Bertie. "Suppose we sat here now, and you had the blessed angel, mother's pet, and one volume of Kipling complete, the only book of his in the world, and the only one there could ever be, the only book in which we could hand on to our children and our children's children such sublime thoughts, the only book, mind you, and if you had to throw one or the other overboard, a piece of sticking plaster or the greatest poet of modern times, which would it be?"

"If I threw my blessed pet over, would you go after him, Bertie?" demanded the widow, to whose mind a question of grave import had just presented itself. "Henry, would you? You know how I love my dainty little kitty kit, would you save him from cruel death for me? For my sake."

"No harm," said Henry with feeling, "shall befall the angel child while I live to protect it—her—him."

"For your sake," said Bertie, "I would die."

"Then," said the widow placidly, "I would sacrifice my own for the sake of posterity. For you would rescue him for me and you wouldn't an old book."

"Ah, no," protested Bertie, "that was not our proposition. Neither the book nor the latest thing in worsted——"

There was a splash, a gurgle and a horrified scream from the widow, as with a sudden lurch of the boat, the little dog lost his balance and fell overboard.

"Oh, my precious, my lamb," cried the widow. "Bertie, save him for me."

"Yes, yes," declared Bertie, hanking over the rail and watching the struggling dog in the water below. "Yes, yes, certainly."

"Henry," pleaded the widow. "If you love me——"

"Trust me," said Henry soothingly, hiding a gleam of satisfaction in his mild blue eyes. "I will have the boat stopped."

The widow's daughter and chaperon appeared in the companionway, flushed and sleepy. "Mamma, what is the matter?"

"Caroline, my precious lamb," and the widow motioned dramatically seaward. "Henry, you said——"

"I will," said Henry. "I will have the boat stopped."

"I will do that," cried the widow. "You jump overboard and save him."

Caroline yawned and raised her soft white hands to her tumbled hair. "Do save him, Bertie, I'm not equal to the task of comforting mamma, just now."

Bertie looked at his immaculate yacht ing clothes and hesitated.

"Ah, you do not love me," cried the widow. "Oh, my baby, my own."

"I love you so," said Bertie solemnly. "I refuse to leave you in your grief even for a moment."

A long white arm shot over the crest of a tumbled wave and was followed by a man's head and long, thin body. The man swam well and quickly and was making straight for the now swimming dog.

"A rescue, a rescue," cried Henry, and added softly to himself, "Oh, poppycock!"

CHAPTER XXV.

As He Said He Would.

THE widow leaned far over the side. "Oh," said she, "the man is naked."

"As truth," agreed Bertie. "You might retire, you know."

"I won't look," promised the widow, turning her back and peering over her shoulder. "But is he near my lamb now. Will he, can he save him?"

"Unfortunately, yes, mamma," said Caroline.

Bertie and Henry leaned over the rail and watched the rescue, the long, easy strokes of the swimmer and the amusement on his face as a wave carried the struggling dog within reach and he grabbed the little woolly back.

"Saved!" cried Bertie, and turned just in time to grab Mrs. Armitage, who was also turning to see over the rail, by her fat shoulders and whirl her around again. "Safe, dear lady, but look the other way. Our hero is clothed in the seafoam and his own nobility, nothing else."

Henry was already disappearing down the companionway, the yacht was stopping and the crew standing by on the lower deck to lend assistance to rescued and rescuer.

The evening was warm and sultry. What little breeze there had been during the day had gone down with the sun, while the ocean heaved and moaned in long, green swells and ran softly whispering up the beach and splashed against the rocks with hardly a flake of foam. The sun, sinking behind the hills, cast long orange and pink streaks across the waves, and turned the small white clouds overhead a dainty, rosy mass of drifting color.

Bartlett and Billy strolled down the winding street of the little seaside town out on the pier and stood idly waiting for the evening mailboat to arrive. Henrietta and the general were coming on the evening boat to spend the autumn in a small cottage which the general was pleased to call his "shooting-box." But Bartlett's pleasure at seeing Henrietta once more was mingled with worry and uneasiness over Billy and the Watermelon. He smoked thoughtfully and watched Billy warily, tenderly. She leaned against a pile and gazed over the vast unrest of the ocean to the distant horizon, with dreaming, unfathomable eyes. Bartlett knew of whom she was thinking, whom waiting for more and more eagerly every day now as August drew to a close and still he did not come. But this evening he had come, he was in the same neighborhood, drunk and probably hungry. When they met, as they must and that shortly, would he make a scene, become loud-mouthed, foul, abusive? It would be hard on Billy, and Bartlett wished vainly that he could spare her. But it was best that she should know, should understand fully and with a sudden quick cut it would be over with, the June madness when one is young and pretty and care-free. Billy would read her folly in the bleared eyes of a shiftless fool. Yet the boy was clever in getting out of a tight place, and Bartlett admired cleverness intensely, not being slow himself when it came to a hard bargain. The boy had gentle blood in his veins, too, more's the pity. It was simply a case of a good family gone to seed. Poor little Billy and her pupy love! A most unfortunate affair, the whole mistaken, unhappy business!

"There comes the Mary Gloucester," said Billy, breaking into his thoughts. She nodded toward the yacht, steaming majestically around the headland, pennons gayly waving and the bright awning a splash of color in the afterglow.

"The Mary Gloucester," chuckled Bartlett. "That woman hasn't the sense of her ugly little poodle dog."

"I know," said Billy, "that is why I have always been so afraid of her?"

"Why afraid of her?"

"For a mother," explained Billy unfortunately, but characteristically saying the wrong thing.

Bartlett flushed. "You just admitted that she was a fool. Do you think I would marry that kind of a woman?"

"Men always do," said Billy, "A fool's bad enough, but a fool and money are simply irresistible."

"You know too much for your age," said Bartlett coldly.

"I don't exactly know it," blundered Billy. "I just see it."

"Billy, have you ever seen me——"

"Yes, father. That night in the pavilion at the Ainsleys'—"

"That will do, Billy."

Billy was hurt. "I don't mean to be nasty, father; but you asked me——"

"There comes the mail boat," interrupted Bartlett firmly.

Billy looked at it and sighed. It was the last of August and Jeroboam Martin had not come. Had he forgotten in two short months?

Bartlett laid his hand tenderly on her shoulder. "Forget him, girlie. He's not worthy of you."

"He said he would come," whispered Billy.

"If he doesn't, dear, you have me. We have stood together through everything for eighteen years and will stand, still, eh, Billy?"

Billy bent her head and rubbed her cheek against the hand on her shoulder with a half laugh and a half sob.

With the first sight of the smoke on the horizon, heralding the approach of the principal event of the day, the arrival of the evening mail, a crowd had begun to gather, the usual motley crowd of a summer resort on the coast. Townspeople hung indifferently on the outskirts, while the summer visitors, in dainty dresses and baggy trousers, sunburnt, jovial, indefatigable, pressed to the front. The hum of talk and laughter grew as the crowd grew, good-natured, meaningless chatter. The sight of the Mary Gloucester, steaming gracefully into port, was greeted with a gay flutter of handkerchiefs and straw hats, and Billy and Bartlett, standing where the yacht would dock, were soon the center of the laughing, merry crowd, ready and eager to welcome home the stout widow, her unfortunate chaperon and the two "supplements," as a village wag called the fat Henry and the slim Bertie.

As the yacht drew near, the widow's corpulent form was seen by the rail, on one side a tall youth, and on the other, two, side by side and apparently in no very good humor.

"Three, by George," cried Blatts, a prosperous brewer from Milwaukee. "She left here with two and returns with three. Where did she get him, Bartlett?"

But Bartlett did not answer, did not hear. The gangplank had been lowered and he was watching in numb fascination, the tall youth walking beside the widow, her ridiculous dog in his arms. It was Jeroboam Martin in an immaculate white suit of Bertie's. His hat was off and his hair, after the swim, gleamed soft and yellow. For the sake of the widow upon whose boat he found himself, he had shaved as well as he could with Henry's razor, and while his cheeks were smooth enough, he still wore a small yellow mustache and goatee. Both were brushed until they shone like his hair and they lent a fascinating and distinctly foreign air to his long, thin, clever face. In his arms was the little dog with its enormous bow of sky-blue ribbon.

Bartlet wondered if he were going mad and seeing things that were not so. At two, or thereabouts, he had seen Martin, dirty, shabby, tired, and had given him money on which to get drunk. At seven, a yacht, which had not been in Westhaven for over a week, carefully deposits the youth, clean, fresh, well-dressed at his very side. Was he mad?

Billy, too, had seen, but did not wonder. She knew he was a tramp, for he had said he was, but she never thought of him or pictured him other than well-dressed, well-cared for, gently blase and a bit languid. She looked at him now over the heads of the intervening crowd and her heart did not question how he came there, only rushed out to him with the gladness in her eyes, the joyous smile on her parted lips. He had said he would come, and there he was. Further she did not question. Their eyes met over the heads of the people, eager questioning in his, joyous answer in hers.

Hastily he dropped the pup with the sky-blue bow upon the wharf, among the plebeian feet there assembled, and reaching Billy's side through the crowd, grabbed both small hands and stood laughing down at her.

"Billy," he whispered, "Oh, you Billy."

There was, there must be some explanation, Bartlett told himself desperately. It could not be that this was not Martin? Bartlett had not slept with the youth for nearly a week without being pretty familiar with the long lank form, the thin, careless face. And is was equally impossible that the forlorn piece of humanity who had stood that afternoon in the drawing-room and inquired for Billy was not Martin. They were one and the same and once more he and Billy had met on equal footing. To ask the boy again to get drunk was an absurdity.

"I suppose I can give him a job where he won't have much more to do than draw his pay," thought Bartlett, hopelessly, dazedly.

The Watermelon dropped Billy's hands and turned to her father in well-bred greeting, but their eyes met and in the Watermelon's was grim defiance. He had seen Billy again and nothing could part them now. All his humility and repentance had gone, and in their place was his old-time arrogance and sublime self-assurance. Fate in the form of a little white dog had brought him and Billy together again, with the Watermelon, still clean, still well-dressed, and to all outward appearances the same as the other gay youths of Billy's acquaintance. With head up, jaw shut, he scorned to lower himself for any one. He would prove himself worthy, not unworthy of Billy. Out of his repentance had grown his manhood. He was no nameless hobo of the great army of the unemployed. He was Jeroboam Martin, son of the late Reverend Mr. Martin, in temporary financial embarrassment that could be soon remedied. He would work for Billy and they would be happy on his wages. He drew himself up and held out his hand, Bartlett could take it or not as he pleased. The Watermelon had sought or desired no man's favor, and Jeroboam Martin would not stoop to do so.

For one second the two stared at each other grimly, square jaws shut, lips unsmiling, then Bartlett's hand shot forth and he clasped the Watermelon's.

"Ah, Martin," said he, "how are you, boy?"

And still holding him by the hand, he patted the Watermelon on his arm, jovially. After all he liked the boy, and right or wrong, wise or foolish, fate was against any other action, late in the form of a half-drowned poodle dog.

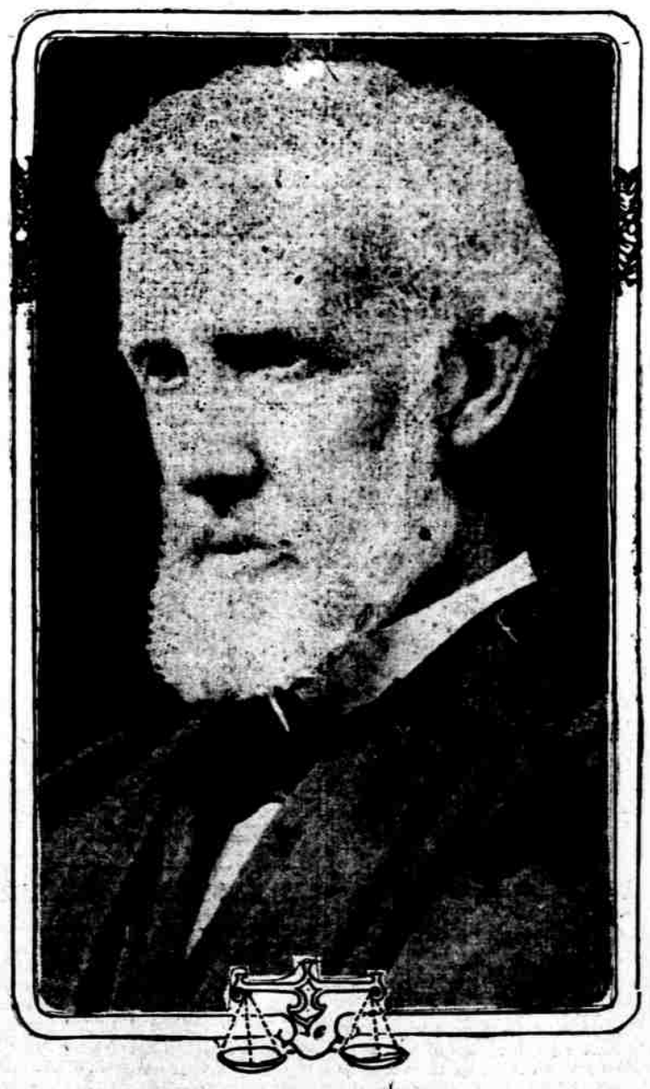
The Watermelon rested his arm on Bartlett's shoulder with boyish affection. "Say, Bartlett," said he in a low voice, "I got drunk, honest to rights. But it was so blamed hot; I cooled off in the ocean before I knew what I was about and that sobered me up again. Then I saw something fall from the yacht and I thought it was a kid from the noise they were making, not just a pup. I swam out to help and of course they hauled me on board, and now the widow is planning to marry me."

Bartlett roared. "Say, boy, er—er—maybe you need a loan until I can see about that job for you."

Once more their eyes met and this time in complete and tender accord.

"You're all right," whispered the Watermelon, his face softening. "And don't you worry about Billy," he added, "I'll take care of her."

THE END.



JUSTICE JOHN W. GOFF,

Before whom is being tried the case of Police Lieut. Charles A. Becker, charged with complicity in the murder of Gambler Rosenthal. Justice Goff will sit on the cases of all the men indicted in connection with the murder of Rosenthal, and is also in charge of the investigation into the alleged corrupt conditions in the New York Police Department.

Use for Old Newspapers.

From the National Review.

In the customs statistics of Newchang for 1911 there appears as a separate item, under the heading of paper an importation of 4,211,872 pounds of old newspapers, valued at $71,138. This is a new feature. These old newspapers, which appear to be mostly British, are in extensive demand in the Newchang district for wall paper for native houses and cottages. Apart from this new development, the importation of foreign paper was somewhat less in value, though more in bulk, than in 1910, but the difference is far more than balanced by a largely increased importation of paper of native manufacture. The local Chinese newspapers have enormously increased their circulation during the year. This is doubtless the reason for a greatly enhanced demand for printing paper, both of native and of foreign make of cheap quality.